



Leo Africanus

What do you think about the opening paragraph of *Leo Africanus*? In what ways does this particular statement of identity—or perhaps “anti-identity”—inform the rest of the book? And how does it relate to the overall theme of “Connected Histories”?

In writing this book, to what extent do you think Amin Maalouf was inspired by history, and to what extent was he constrained by it? In what way is this type of book—a novel written in the form of an autobiography of a real person—different from a novel about a purely fictional character, or a from a work of history? What responsibility does an author of such a book have to “keep to the facts”?

How do you feel about the way female characters are represented in the book? What role do they play in the construction of Leo’s identity? And how do Maalouf’s decisions about the way they appear in the narrative relate to the previous question about historical accuracy?

The choice between baptism and exile—or between baptism and slavery—is a recurrent theme throughout the book. How is it dealt with in different ways and by different people, and what are the consequences?

Discuss the roles of “fate” and “free will” in Leo’s life as presented by Maalouf. How do these relate to the larger themes of the book?